

*Briefing*

3 February 1986

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Soviet Analysis

THROUGH: Chief, Strategic Issues Group, SOVA  
Chief, Strategic Forces Division, SOVA/SIG

FROM: [redacted] 25X1  
Chief, [redacted] 25X1

SUBJECT: Report on European SDI Briefing 25X1  
20 to 24 January 1986 [redacted]

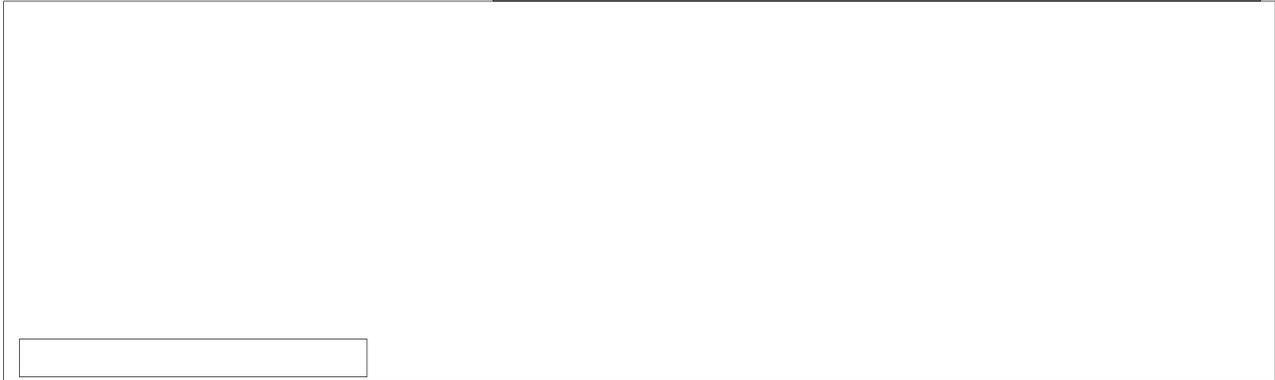
1. During the period 20 to 24 January 1986, I travelled to Europe as part of a [redacted] SDI briefing team. The team was headed by JIM HOLMES, State/PM/SNP, and included representatives from ACDA, OSD-Policy, and the SDIO. The team's purpose was to brief selected neutral European governments on the SDI program and its role in the US policy. My role on the team was to discuss Soviet strategic defense programs. Our stops included Helsinki, Stockholm, Zurich, Bern, and the Vatican. State Department representatives at each of these locations were responsible for developing an agenda, which usually included official classified briefings to local government personnel and public unclassified visits with media members or private citizens. [redacted] 25X1  
[redacted] 25X1

2. The Helsinki portion of the trip was perhaps the low point of the visit. Although our arrival in Finland was announced in one of the local papers on the morning of our first presentation, our briefings, both official and public, raised little comment. We were greeted with a great deal of warmth and hospitality, but the response to substantive matters was reserved indicating, I believe, that SDI is not much of an issue in this part of the world, or perhaps, that minds in Helsinki are made up. For example, USIA had scheduled a two-hour meeting with the Finnish media. Although the meeting was well covered and reported in a neutral way in a number of newspapers and on Finnish television, it broke up approximately 30 minutes early due to a lack of further questions. (The highlight of this meeting was its setting, the USIA library. We happened to be seated in one of the book sections directly under two large signs that read "Fiction." We, as well as several of our questioners, picked up on the interesting juxtaposition.) [redacted] 25X1

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3. Stockholm was perhaps the most challenging stop on the trip. The Embassy there did an excellent job in arranging a variety of appointments that included several sessions with the Ambassador, well attended briefing sessions with Swedish MOD officials and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), and a two-hour interview with six Swedish journals. The highlight of this portion of the visit was a dinner hosted by the DCM that included several Swedish parliament members--one pro-SDI and the other against it, and MOD and MFA officials. [redacted]

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4. Our reception in Stockholm was cordial, with one notable exception, and the questions on a high plain. Most dealt with the effect of the SDI program on strategic stability. I do not believe the role of Swedish industrial involvement came up. This, of course, has been a topic of great concern in other parts of Europe. We did get a rather snarling question on "manufactured Soviet arms control violations" from a senior SIPRI researcher

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5. Our Swiss appointments included a two-hour visit with an association of Swiss manufacturers, lunch with a dozen or so journalists, and a well attended briefing for MOD and MFA officials. The emphasis in Switzerland was on how Swiss business could get in on a research program that lacked official Swiss sanction. Although this was foremost in the minds of the manufacturers, it concerned the Government officials as well. The team was warned not to get Swiss hopes too high in this regard. I think US Embassy officials in Switzerland are well aware of the problems the Swiss face in winning any contracts, especially now that the UK (and soon the FRG) is on board. [redacted]

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6. The trip concluded in the Vatican. This portion of the trip began with an hour long meeting with the Ambassador who was concerned that our visit would rekindle Vatican uneasiness over the number of high-level SDI "salesmen" who have briefed the topic over the past 12 months. He stated that each visit seemed to the Vatican to be an attempt to elicit public support for the program. Numerous Vatican officials have told the Ambassador privately that it would be impossible for them to support a military program, which potentially takes food from the mouths of the poor. Jim Holmes told the Ambassador, and later our Vatican hosts, that our purpose was not to seek converts for the effort but to carry out the President's promise to inform and consult regularly with allies, friends, and neutrals alike. We received a warm reception and a polite hearing from a 10 or so Vatican representatives. Our audience consisted of both clergy and non-clergy with most of the latter category coming from scientific positions at the Vatican Observatory. It was headed by a cardinal who, according to the Ambassador, was an important confidant of the Pope. Our audience's questions and comments generally sought clarification on points made during the briefings and did not really reflect a lot of concern on its part. We were told by the DCM at a follow-up meeting that our Vatican hosts appreciated the briefings and found the presentation of Soviet activity especially useful. Moreover, the cardinal was to give the Pope a rundown of our meeting that evening. In short, the Ambassador was quite pleased with the outcome. [redacted]

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7. Overall, I thought the trip was quite successful. From a substantive point, my fears that the salesmanship part of the mission would pressure me into briefing material that went beyond what we could support were unfounded. Jim Holmes gave me maximum flexibility and reminded our audience that Soviet strategic defense activity was only a part of the impetus for the SDI program. We were careful not to make too much of Soviet arms control violations, [redacted] stops. In this regard, Jim Holmes took an interesting swipe at Jesse Helms, and others like him, during a session with Swiss journalists. I suspect that the State Department cable channels reflected some Embassy "surprise" at his comment. Administratively, the trip went smoothly. [redacted]

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[redacted] My Vatican presentation was marred by a cancelled courier trip, which left me without [redacted] briefing aids [redacted].

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Although I was able to work around this, it is clear that this persuasive evidence was a key part of the SDI story. Frankly, without it, the team's presentations lack at least interest if not substance. [redacted]

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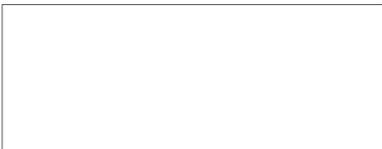
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